

Interim's Corner

Resurrection

By Rev. Won-Jae Hur

Once a minister preached a sermon on a summer morning so hot that all the doors and windows in the church had to be opened. He was tired from a night of restless sleep. To make matters worse, the church printer was out of order that morning and he had not been able to print out his sermon. The people in the pews were fanning themselves with the Sunday bulletin and visibly impatient to get on with the service. The minister stood nervously in front of them and made his way through the sermon as best he could. After the service ended, he took his place by the door and greeted the parishioners. He detected nothing unusual in the customary handshakes and hugs he exchanged with the people.

About a year later, he received a note from one of his parishioners, a man who had lost his son suddenly and unexpectedly two years before. The man wrote, "I was angry with God for taking away my son, and I was losing my faith. Then one Sunday it was very hot, and you were preaching. I remember walking out afterwards, and you were warm and kind. I don't know why, but I then felt like I could believe again. Thank you."

The minister, of course, had not known that he had had such an effect on this person. It was a miracle of grace, happening without visible sign or intentional effort on the minister's part. From his perspective, it had been a discouraging morning of ill preparation and bad preaching. All the more credit, then, to the grace of God.

This story is a story about the resurrection. The resurrection is the heart of the Christian story and view of life. From the beginning of our history, Christians toiled and faced many trials in order to spread the hope of the resurrection in Christ. Paul often speaks (perhaps too often) about how much he suffered for the sake of the Gospel. However, he did not suffer alone. The larger community of Christians was working alongside him, making similar sacrifices in the service of Christ's message. They believed so firmly in the power of the Gospel to save the world from the powers of death that they willingly gave up their status, their possessions, and often their lives. Like Paul, their conviction was rooted in their faith in the resurrection. The resurrection of Christ was not just something that happened once; it was a power and reality in which they could



Remembering
Jesus' Passion

Celebrating
His Resurrection

Liturgy and
Community at St. James

Mundy Thursday ~ April 1

6:30 pm Community Supper and Eucharist,
Stripping of Sanctuary

Good Friday ~ April 2

12:00 noon and 7:00 p.m. Good Friday Liturgy
with Veneration of the Cross

Holy Saturday ~ April 3

9:00 p.m. at Grace Cathedral
North of Market Area Ministry Worship: Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday ~ April 4

8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Eucharist

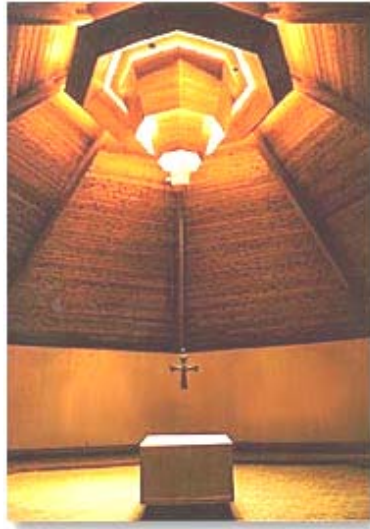
participate in the present life. Paul expresses this in a beautiful passage in Philippians:

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." (Phil 3:10-12)

What I find moving about this passage is the very personal and intimate terms in which Paul speaks about the

resurrection. Far from being an other-worldly dream, he sees it as the goal of his life, which he will attain not through effort but through intimate knowledge of Christ.

I once went on a retreat to the New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur. At lunchtime I entered the guest kitchen and was hovering over the refrigerator when I saw a small square of paper taped to the door. A series of words formed a written circle: "I am Yours, You are Mine." These words are the motto of the Camaldolese monastic order to which the Hermitage belongs. They made me take a step back. I was surprised by their intimacy and tenderness.



The intimate longing expressed in those words, I find, is not all that different from what I hear in Paul's words: "I press on to make it [the resurrection] my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." In our worship life, we joyously celebrate the resurrection with grand liturgies. That is right and important, because Easter is the greatest feast of our faith. I wonder, however, whether the actual lived experience of the resurrection often comes more quietly and unexpectedly, like in the story of that minister and the grieving father, like a whisper spoken tenderly by the loving Christ, "You are mine and I am yours."



From Our Senior Warden

By Karen Clopton

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful." - Colossians 3:12-15

These verses aptly guide us in our important journey this year as we search for a new rector, bring our house in order, and reconcile the past with the future. Last year the Vestry, under the incomparable leadership of Senior Warden Doreen Canton, shepherded us through the

process of searching for and hiring an interim rector; downsizing church staff and programs; and after many discussions, including listening sessions at the semi-annual parish meeting, ultimately ending the capital campaign for a new building. Throughout the process of making these decisions, the vestry has had one guiding principle, the Mission of St. James Church:

"To bring an ever increasing number of people into an ever closer relationship with Jesus Christ, so that God's love may be a transforming force for the communities in which we live."

This year's Vestry is equally challenged by the budget, the winding down of the capital campaign and the complicated distribution of contributions to it, the rector search, declining membership, and congregational healing. With support and patience from the faithful, we hope to accomplish much this year to strengthen our parish and continue the mission of St. James. During last year's spirited discussions about the building campaign and the Community Learning Center at St. James, we learned that the CLC's fantastic outreach programming resonated with most parishioners. As a result, we are committed to continuing our community outreach to the greater Richmond District. We have also lost much of our diversity over the last few years, and hope to again attract diverse congregants who will feel a deep sense of belonging in our radical inclusivity as a welcoming Oasis congregation. It is often said that church on Sunday morning continues to be the most segregated place in American society. We want to be part of the movement to change this.

"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful." As we practice lectio divina, encourage stewardship, and move to preserve and unite

our church, let us all work together in love and harmony to achieve our mission.

"...Indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful."



From the Junior Warden's Toolbox

By John Harrison



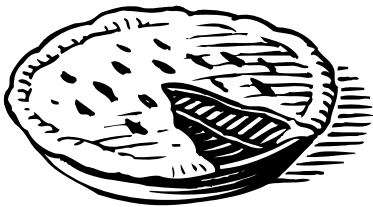
I hope that, by the time you read this, you will have commented about seeing spic-and-span liturgical spaces at St. James, noticed the organized pantry and clean refrigerator, and heard about how the grill sparkles after its scrub-down and polishing. All of that will have been brought about during the pre-Holy Week workday on March 27th.

If you were at the workday, thanks! If you missed this session, don't worry; there will be at least one more, later in the year.

If you know about a project at St. James that needs some attention, feel free to let your Junior Warden know (home (650) 355 – 6700; cell (650) 483 – 7106; e-mail j.harriso@comcast.net; and there's a box for the Junior Warden in the church office). You can also share your ideas with Erazm Pochron, our parish administrator.



**SAVE THE DATE —
AND SAVE ROOM FOR PIE!**

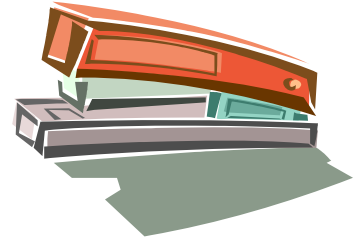


St. James PIE SUNDAY, April 11

Stay after the 10:00 a.m. service for a slice of pie and a discussion of St. James's finances (with—you guessed it—pie charts!)

Bring a pie, bring an appetite,
bring a calculator, bring a friend—
We hope to see you there!

Because You Staple ...



**... we can mail,
at a reduced rate!**

Special thanks to those who receive a paper copy of this Journal in the mail, for providing a staple or paper clip and saving us a scolding (and fine!) from the post office.

Paint, Hammer, Garden

By Roger Wickstrom

What's this? A new rock-paper-scissors routine? Not really – it's a St. James community service opportunity (now a tradition for at least five years) to work with **Rebuilding Together San Francisco**.

On **April 24th** we will join friends from St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church in a service project at Oakes Children's Center in their new location in Bernal Heights. Join us for a day full of hammering, cleaning, painting and gardening as we help Oakes improve their new site to better meet the needs of the developmentally challenged children they work with. All skill levels are welcome!

This is a great day of work and service, making new friendships and working strange muscles. And, as Henri Nouwen said so well, "Here we are touching on a profound spiritual truth, that service is an expression of the search for God and not just of the desire to bring about individual or social change."

A sign-up sheet is posted in the Parish Hall. The work day lasts from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. – come for a few hours or all day. Contact Grant Paul at gpchem67@sbcglobal.net or Roger Wickstrom at rogewick@hotmail.com with any questions.

More information about each organization can also be found at their websites: www.oakeschildrenscenter.org and www.rebuildingtogethersf.org.



Our Rector Search is Live!

By Jan Vennari, Search Committee Co-Chair

Our search for a new rector is now public and live. The Parish Profile and information for applicants are posted on the St. James website. We have reached out to many potential applicants suggested by the Diocese, and several candidates, both independently and through the Diocese, have expressed interest.

The deadline for applicants is March 31. The Search Committee will be reviewing applications in early April, and selecting candidates with whom to schedule telephone interviews later in the month.

We encourage you to read the Parish Profile if you haven't already done so – it's a significant body of work that provides an in-depth look St James. You can find a .pdf of the Profile at www.stjamesf.org. As always, if you have any questions about the search process, please get in touch with any member of the Committee.



Keep St. James
looking
beautiful ...

get to know
our neighbors ...

start your
weekend
in the fresh air!

Join us for



“Saturday Courtyard Time”

Sweeping, pruning, watering, and fellowship

Every Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Everyone's welcome – rakes and brooms provided!

Get details from Barb Webb or Elizabeth Nelson –
or just show up on any Saturday morning

Your Rector Search Committee

Please contact any member if you have questions,
opinions, or information to share!

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Mothers Helping Mothers Group

By Anne Mackenzie

The Saint James' Mothers Helping Mothers group was formed in 2007 to address the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal Number Five, "improve maternal health" by 2015, and to honor Mother Mary. Current members are Nancy Newmeyer, Mary Ann Faris, Noreen Huey, Barbara Webb, Meg Bloomfield, Giselle Bosc, Mary Balmana, Laurel Paul, Lynn Thompson and Anne Mackenzie.

A key component of women's health is financial stability, so the group uses micro-lending – and, occasionally, cash donations – to support mothers in different countries. Micro-lending or micro-credit is the practice of extending small loans to impoverished persons to spur entrepreneurship and self-employment projects that generate income and help individuals and families to emerge from poverty. Periodically, Mothers Helping Mothers collects small cash donations from our generous St. James community. It then checks the repayment status of current loans, chooses new candidates, and uses our congregation's donations plus the repaid amounts to make new micro-loans or donations. In keeping with the group's focus to assist struggling mothers, two organizations have provided many candidates: Kiva and Midwives On Missions of Service (MOMS).

Kiva (<http://www.kiva.org>) combines microfinance with the internet to allow individuals to lend to entrepreneurs around the globe. This method encourages mutually dignified and respectful partner relationships, as opposed to benefactor relationships; accountability, because of the expectation that the loans will be repaid; and transparency, since the website is an open platform where the information is available to anyone around the world. The Kiva website displays photos, brief biographies, and business plans of persons seeking loans. As of 2009, Kiva has facilitated over \$100 million in micro-lending.

Mothers Helping Mothers searches the Kiva website for mothers who may need full funding for their project, or partial funding to complete their financial request. As the

loans are repaid, we are able to support more women entrepreneurs in different countries. By the beginning of March 2010 we had made \$2,635 in micro-loans, ranging from \$25 to \$350, to 15 recipients in 13 countries such as Togo, Herzegovina and Nicaragua. We are constantly astounded by how far a dollar can be stretched by the women we fund. A recent participant is Miriam G. in the Philippines, mother of four children. For a number of years she has supported her family by selling the rice she grows. We loaned her \$200, the balance of her request, for fertilizer.

Some may recall a presentation at St. James last May by Trish Ross of Midwives On Missions of Service, or MOMS (<http://www.globalmidwives.org/sierraleone1>). This fairly new organization operates in remote villages in the southeastern province of Sierra Leone, which has the highest maternal and infant mortality rate in the world. They concentrate on teaching local women methods of healthy pregnancy and midwifery, including what to do should something go wrong. Christie McManus, a former St. James member and Deacon, serves as the current President of the Board. Mothers Helping Mothers made a cash donation of about \$300 to MOMS last year.

On Sundays that celebrate Mother Mary, such as the celebration of the Annunciation on March 21st and the Sundays in the Marian month of May (including Mother's Day), Mothers Helping Mothers will remind the St. James community of our group's goals and ask for donations. Past generosity by our congregation has enabled us to improve the lives of fifteen mothers and their families. Talk with any of the group members to learn more about the lending process and the women St. James has helped so far.



Time and Talent: Roger Wickstrom

By Barbara Burgess

Several things attracted Roger Wickstrom to St. James when he first came in the 1990s. "The simple warm beauty of the sanctuary, reminding me of the clean simplicity of Scandinavian country churches ... the quiet anonymity I could relish at the 8 a.m. service ... the thoughtful, challenging content of the sermons." Soon the quiet anonymity dissipated as Roger was approached to help out with ushering, reading, and community service projects, and then to fill leadership positions on the Vestry and Search Committee. He says, "The overall spirit of hope and joy and discerning cooperation of the Search Committee has been a memorable feeling."

While Roger was invited to participate in some parish activities, others are ministries that, he says, "I naturally

feel committed and called to as I live into this walk of faith." Among these activities are helping to coordinate Rebuilding Together, serving at St. Martin de Porres ("when I can make it!") and the Interfaith Winter Shelter, and participating in the Lectio Divina series, the Wednesday evening Lenten programs, parish work days, and Sunday worship.

"Although a sense of duty may creep in to my thoughts around some of these activities," Roger says, "I do feel that I am attracted by Christ's call; attracted to some activities as I struggle to grasp what his call and message means to me and to live out my life in light of his call to relationship, compassion, and service." He says some of the challenges arising from his participation at St. James are "time, organizing, and follow-through ... and trusting that decisions I am making, and part of, are decisions discerned well."



COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER ONGOING CLASSES AND EVENTS

For Children and Youth

Saturday Learning Time	9:00 a.m.-noon. Call 415-751-1199 for information.
ASPIRE After School Program	M-F 2:45-6:00 p.m. Call 415-751-1199 for information.
Suzuki Music Lessons	Call 415-412-6723 for information.
Youth Empowering Youth (Homework Help Center)	Call 415-751-1199 to volunteer.
Children's Yoga with Ms. Homa	Call 415-752-2192 for information.

For Adults

"Always Active" Senior Exercise	Mondays 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. in the Parish Hall. Wednesdays 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall.
Buddhist Meditation	Wednesdays 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall.
Overeaters Anonymous	Sundays 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. in the Caldwell Room. Tuesdays 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall.
Debtors Anonymous	Tuesdays 5:30 – 7:15 in the Caldwell Room.
California Collectors Club	2 nd and 4 th Fridays, 6:00-9:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

What would Roger like people to know about Saint James? "The sense of community built and friends made," he says. "The sense of helping others, even just a bit, to live more wholly. Our programs and even St. James itself are acts of prayer and worship, service and relationship – shared with others and ourselves."



Practice

By Tina Smelser, MFT
California Counseling Institute

I have been thinking about the meaning of practice lately, and realizing that pretty much everything I do is practicing something. For example, if I am not practicing standing up straight, I am practicing *not* standing up straight. I first had this realization a couple of years ago, when I had let myself go too long without a vacation. I started looking ahead excessively, overly focused on my upcoming vacation, unwittingly practicing being somewhere other than where I was in the present. Once I actually was on the vacation, it was difficult to give up what I had been practicing. When I was hiking in the woods, I was looking forward to eating lunch. When I was eating lunch, I was thinking ahead to the book I wanted to read. When I was reading the book, I was anticipating taking a nap. It took me a couple of days to actually be there, enjoying what I had been looking forward to as it was happening. I try to remind myself now that if I want an enjoyable vacation, it would be better to practice being fully where I am in non-vacation mode, making it easier to be really be there when I reach the vacation.

This type of practice is unconscious, where we get better at a behavior by repeating it without realizing that we are doing so. We do this all the time with body postures, messages we give ourselves, ways we communicate with others.

There is also conscious practice, where we purposefully set aside time, space, and energy to engage in specific behavior. It might be a creative pursuit, such as music, writing, or drawing. It might be physical practice of a sport, spiritual practice of meditation or prayer, or physical/spiritual practice of a body/mind discipline such as yoga or T'ai Chi. There is great power in practicing something and observing the changes over time in yourself and in the form you have chosen to practice. To nurture your practice, you may want to find a class, group, or teacher. You may want to set aside a specific time of day when your energy is most in sync with the practice, as well as a place that is conducive. These frameworks can support your intention to practice.



My soul ever lifting up to the sun;
Envisioning my God and me as one.
My dreams open up;
and yield to desires –
Here-to-fore known to me
as Angels choirs.

- Christie Higgins

In looking for inspiration for this article, I turned to two of my favorite books: *The Listening Book: Discovering Your Own Music*, by W.A. Mathieu, and *Free Play: The Power of Improvisation in Life and the Arts*, by Stephen Nachmanovitch. In a small chapter of *The Listening Book* called "Telephoning Counts," Mathieu writes of the importance of the preliminaries of practice, likening it to clearing the forest before building a house. He says that when you are phoning the babysitter to arrange for time to practice, you can say to yourself, "I'm doing music now." (p. 79)

In *Free Play*, Nachmanovitch writes about the difference between typical western and eastern ways of looking at practice. "The Western idea of practice is to acquire a skill. It is very much related to our work ethic, which enjoins us to endure struggle or boredom now in return for future rewards. The Eastern idea of practice, on the other hand, is to create the person, or rather to actualize the complete person who is already there. This is not practice for something, but complete practice, which suffices unto itself." (pp. 67-68) He also stresses the importance of ritually preparing for practice, and finds that in preparing to create, he is already creating. (p. 74)

Practice involves the discipline of doing something even when you might not feel like it. In New Age mentality, there is an underlying directive to “follow your bliss” or “go with the flow”. Does this contradict the idea of practice, which might not always feel like bliss or flow? One way to hold both ideas is to see bliss or flow as the overarching inspiration, while understanding that the small steps on the path may not feel always blissful or flowing but may be a necessary part of the journey.

With my therapy clients, I encourage viewing change as a process. For example, learning to manage one’s anger involves practice to recognize early signs of anger, practice to disengage from it, and practice to express it constructively. After practicing other patterns, often for years, new behaviors may feel foreign. It takes repetition for new patterns to start to feel familiar. I have read that it takes 21 days to change a habit. While I balk at statements giving one number that supposedly can apply to everyone for anything, I appreciate the idea of practice implicit in this statement.

I hope these ideas have spurred your thoughts, and will encourage reflection about what you may be consciously or unconsciously practicing in your life.



Hell and High Water

Climate Change, Global Warming, and Other Matters of Consequence

By James A. Turner

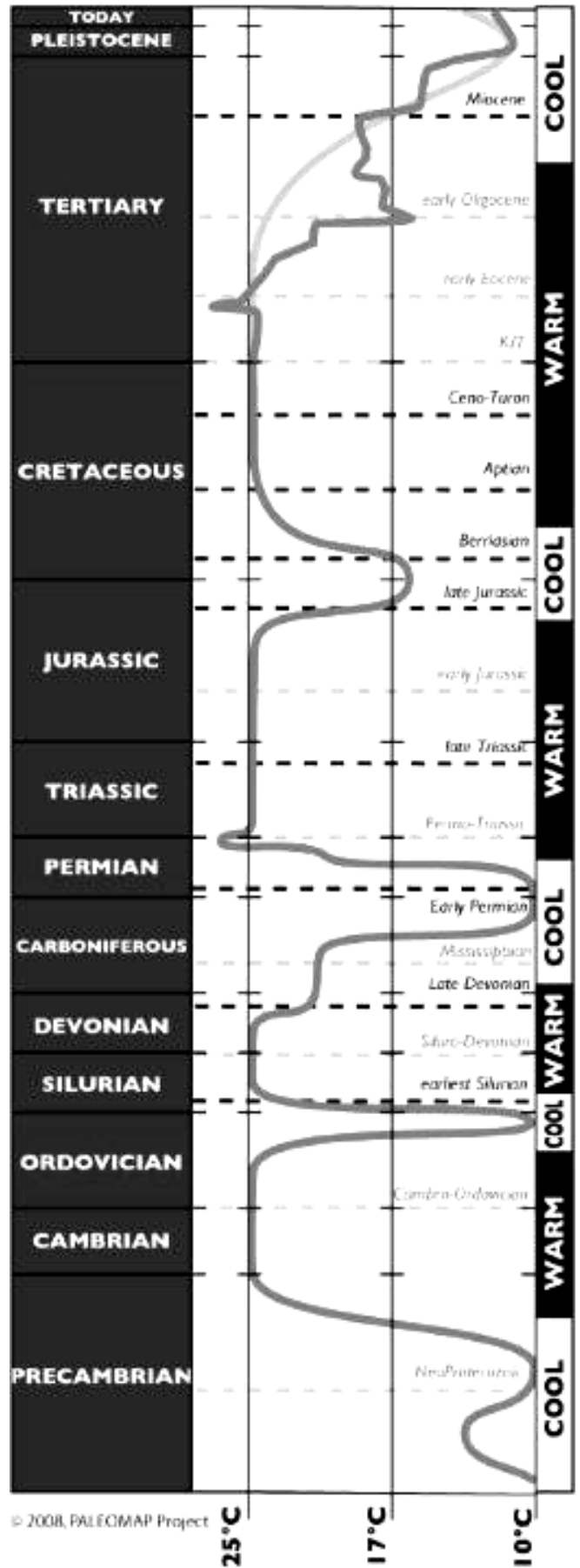
“Global warming: it is a scam.”
 -- John Coleman, Founder of The Weather Channel, in an interview with Glenn Beck, Fox News

“Global warming is one of the most serious challenges facing us today.”
 -- Union of Concerned Scientists, on their website, www.ucsusa.org

“Human-induced climate change is real.”
 -- “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,” from the Evangelical Climate Initiative

In last month’s first essay on climate change and global warming, I pointed out that influences on both were multifaceted and included factors centered on the earth itself, such as our atmosphere and oceans, and factors that are extraterrestrial, primarily solar radiation and the position of the Earth in relationship to the sun. There is much more to explore.

Global warming is a fact! Global cooling is a fact!
 Scientific studies have shown that Earth’s climate has



alternated between global warming and global cooling for millions of years. Yet the quotations cited in the paragraphs above illustrate the controversy that has arisen over the issue of global warming, and especially over the idea that human activity might be responsible for it. Before we can make sense of such controversy, we must try to attain some basic intelligent understanding of what climate change is about.

For hundreds of years, the source for our understanding of Earth was the creation story in Genesis and similar stories from other cultures. Then the science of geology developed, particularly in the 19th century; rocks, not Scripture, began to give us real clues to the history of our planet. We now know that Earth formed about 4.54 billion years ago¹ and that its history has been one of fire, ice, and water. Our solar system, including Earth, formed from interstellar dust and gas.² Our Sun formed first, followed by the planets. Earth was born as a swirling molten spherical mass. It gradually cooled and an outer crust formed, encasing a molten interior that exists today, evidenced by the lava that spews from active volcanoes. Climate was born with the evolving planet's atmosphere – an atmosphere much different, in the beginning, from what we experience now.

The accompanying chart is a graphic portrayal of Earth's temperature variation over more than 550 million years of geologic time, from the ancient past to today.³ Look first at the bottom of the graph for the Precambrian Period, more than 500 million years ago. Note that at first the climate was relatively cool, but then temperatures began to rise toward a peak as climates in all parts of the Earth became warmer in the ensuing Cambrian period. This Cambrian warm period began about 543 million years ago and lasted some 53 million years. At that time the seas contained life, but the continents were still forming and were mostly barren rocks.

Look again at the graph and identify the Carboniferous Period, a Period that I found particularly interesting: not only was the Earth's climate at that time very similar to today's, but North America, by virtue of continental drift, was *situated on the Equator*.⁴ Terrestrial plant life flourished during this Period, and it was from this abundant plant life that coal was eventually formed – and, as you probably know, coal has been targeted as one of the chief contributors to greenhouse gases in our climate today. During the Carboniferous Period there were

interludes of warm and cool that coincided with glacial expansion and contraction.

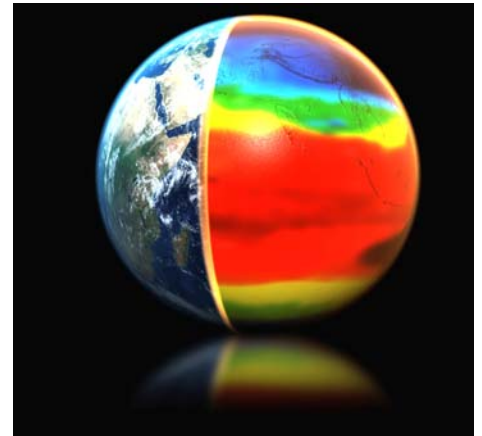
As the graph demonstrates, our Earth has experienced alternating periods of cooling and warming right to the present day. The top of the graph shows Earth's temperatures beginning to rise again. Will this warming trend continue? That is the question being hotly debated now.

The last "Great Ice Age," or period of glaciation, began 110,000 years ago in the Pleistocene Epoch (see upper graph), reaching its maximum 18,000 years ago. This was the age when the huge mastodon and woolly rhinoceros roamed the icy land. It lasted until 10,000 years ago, when the present warming trend began. This is the warming trend that we are experiencing today, and which seems to generate so much controversy.

All of this begs three questions:

- a) How did scientists determine temperatures and climates over such vast periods of ancient geologic time?
- b) Is global warming still occurring in our times? And, if so:
- c) Is human activity accelerating this warming?

More next time.



¹ Geologic Society, London, Special Publications; 2001 V 190; p 205–221.

² Physical Geography.net; e-Book: *Fundamentals of Physical Geography*, Chapter 5: The Universe, Earth, Natural Spheres and Gaia.

³ www.scotese.com: Paleomap Project: Climate History.

⁴ www.geocraft.com: Climate and the Carboniferous Period.



Lent, Easter, and Self-Examination

By Barbara Burgess

“So Lent requires discernment,” Won-Jae said in his Ash Wednesday homily, “and discernment requires detachment. We need time and space to look, and a measure of distance from our usual habits of being, to separate those things that really count and those that do not.” Let’s face it, however, when it comes to self-examination many of us go running for the hills. Even Jesus went running into the forest to try to detach himself even temporarily from his disciples and gain a few moments peace, knowing that soon he was to be executed.

So how do we determine what really counts and what doesn’t? I believe one way is to ask a question Caroloyn Myss poses in her book *Entering the Castle*: “Are you the goal, or is God?” Her point is that if you are the goal, then your self-examination is useless. In order to practice the detachment necessary to examine our lives, Myss continues, we must first get out of our heads. We have to go deeper, past the mind and body and into the spirit, to truly hear God.

A recurring challenge, however, presents itself to us as members of a spiritual community in a secular world. How do we find the time to go deeper? How do we detach and distance ourselves from our usual habits? In our secular lives there are soccer games, ballet recitals, fundraising activities for schools, errands to run, meals to prepare, and the list goes on ad infinitum. Sometimes those scheduled activities in our secular lives conflict with our scheduled spiritual life within the church. Soccer games and ballet recitals are scheduled right in the middle of the 10 a.m. service. Some Sundays we catch a break and there’s no recital or soccer game and we can breathe; we look forward to sleeping in. Then the inner voice says, “We haven’t been to church in a while – maybe we should go.”

At that moment you answer the question for yourself: “Are you the goal? Or is God?” If you’re the goal, you roll over on Sunday morning and go back to sleep, thankful you don’t have anywhere you “have” to be this Sunday. If God is the goal, however, then you get up with or without the family and go to church, thankful for the opportunity to get a little closer to the light of Christ.

During the season of Easter people once again flock to church, sometimes after long absences, seeking the light of Christ in their lives. At that moment they too answer the question: “Are you the goal? Or is God?” If they return to the church not for spiritual enrichment but “for the sake of asceticism,” then they are the goal and not God. Very rarely does it occur that we meet someone once or twice a year and feel that we truly know them. I believe the same is true of God. In order to truly know the resurrected Christ, we must continually look past our minds and bodies and go into our spirits. By doing this we find, as Won-Jae said, that “it is in the love of the Father who dwells in the secret depths of our hearts that we find the courage to see clearly, the strength to turn back and hold fast to what is essential. The sacrifice we make in Lent, we make for love.”

Finally, I leave you with a poem I wrote shortly after the Ash Wednesday homily.

Escape

By Barbara Burgess

Escape into trivia
Drive yourself to distraction!
Embrace the unimportant external.
Forget the internal there’s no instant gratification in *that!*
Don’t panic it’s only your life.
Just a small thing not really all that important.

Fill your life, fill the void with things.

“But there’s one thing you can’t buy in a Europe fire sale or in any other market on earth. And that’s your life. You can’t buy back your life when it’s finished...The human animal is a beast that eventually has to die. And if he’s got money, he buys and he buys and he buys. The reason why he buys everything he can is because his crazy hope is one of the things he buys will be life everlasting - which you never can buy.”

- Tennessee Williams, *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof*





One day all the prisoners were rounded up and paraded in front of the intentionally horrifying spectacle of a boy hanging from piano wire. (He had been caught trying to steal food.) Mr. Wiesel writes that the boy struggled “between life and death” for more than half an hour. As he and all the others passed by – they had to look, otherwise they would suffer the same fate – Mr. Wiesel saw that the boy was alive; his tongue was still red and his eyes had not yet glazed. The spectators shared the boy’s agony.

As they shuffled past this gruesome spectacle, Mr. Wiesel heard someone murmur, “Where is your God now?” And he heard a voice within him say in answer, “Where is he? He is here! Hanging on the gallows.”

It takes a hard heart to read that and not share in the agony of another Jew: the one hanging on the cross.

Perhaps if I can at least superimpose the image of that boy (his red tongue and his eyes full of pain) on Jesus on the cross, then I can, in some way and for the first time, actually see and know our risen Lord later.

Thoughts While Shaving

By Ray Muñoz

I’ve never appreciated the season of Lent. In the old days we were expected to do penance. We were encouraged to mortify the flesh by spending endless hours reading Scripture and praying on our knees, so that we could approach in a small way the agony that Christ felt on the cross. All the statues were shrouded in purple veils. Even the bells that usually were rung during Mass at the elevation of the Host were silent. Instead they used a heavy wooden clapper. Laughter was frowned upon ... even when the little acolyte fell backward from the weight.

The sermons, predictably, were also somber and morose. They described the cross as a horrible way to die, and used such graphic detail that after a while one no longer paid attention. I frankly just wanted it to be over. In those days I must not have snored, because I was never caught sleeping.

At the same time, I sensed that I was missing something. I knew there had to be much more to Lent than what I was feeling. As I looked around, I thought that others might have the same questions about this huge part of the Church year, but they seemed to go along to get along ... or maybe they saw something I didn’t see.

Anything having to do with Lent got my attention. Maybe there was an answer to those questions that I could not somehow frame ... somewhere! I determined then to keep an open mind.

I happened to read a quote from Elie Wiesel’s book *Night* (I have not read it but mean to do so very soon), in which he tells of the time when he was incarcerated in Auschwitz, that horrible prison where so many people died.

Shalom



The Foolishness of Grace

By Elizabeth Nelson

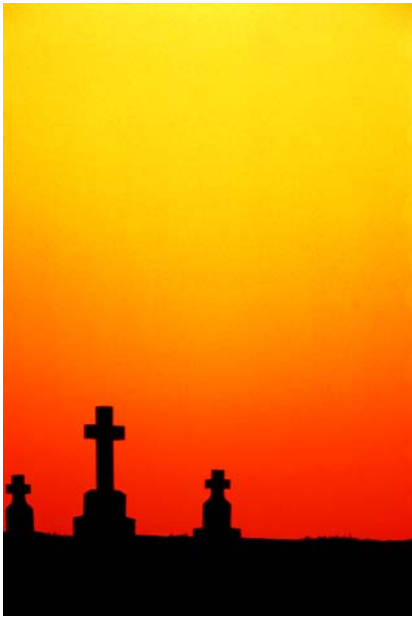
[This column first appeared in the April 2005 Journal; here it is again, edited some and re-titled.]

“For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.... God chose what is foolish in the world to confound the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to confound the strong.” - 1 Corinthians 1: 22-25, 27



Honestly, it’s embarrassing. It was back then, and it’s no better now.

The Jews of the first century wanted a new Moses, a new Joshua, a new David—a Messiah already, to lead the Chosen People out of bondage again. Who did Paul and



the other disciples insist on proclaiming? A scruffy, smart-mouthed Galilean peasant, executed as a criminal by the Romans without even a show of resistance from his followers ... followers who were now spreading some ridiculous story about his coming back to life, and to do what? Not to rout the Governor who

had ordered his execution, not to lead an army from Heaven to liberate Jerusalem, not to deliver Israel from oppression, but just to eat and talk with his friends a few more times. Even if the resurrection story could possibly be swallowed – is *this* the power of God?

The Greeks of the first century wanted *gnosis*, the key to a secret metaphysical map that would reveal sense and order and truth – not of this messy, changeable, unfinished material existence, but of real Being, immutable, eternal, and perfect – and reveal how the human spirit, once the gross body was subdued, could share in that perfection. What did the first Christian teachers have on offer? Stories about a man who'd clearly never read Aristotle or Plato, who was tiresomely obsessed with life in the here-and-now, who referred to the Unmoved Mover and First Cause as "Papa," and who was supposed to have reappeared in the flesh – in the *flesh*? – after he was put to death. Divine wisdom? So sorry, we were hoping for something a little less crude.

Jesus Christ is risen, conquering sin and death. This is what I'm expected to believe – contrary to any experience I've had of death and sin, let alone of power and wisdom? What kind of fool do you take me for?

Christians in this century have their own struggles with the Resurrection. Many who readily accept it as literal truth also see it as a sort of prelude to the Second Coming, when Jesus will finally appear in *real* power. Many others who love and honor Jesus to distraction would question the wisdom of leading with supernatural stories when we proclaim our faith to an empirical, science-driven world. Marcus Borg, for example – exemplary scholar, friend of St. James, a man of heart and mind – has written with great authority and eloquence about Jesus' life and teaching ... until he comes to the Easter story, where he

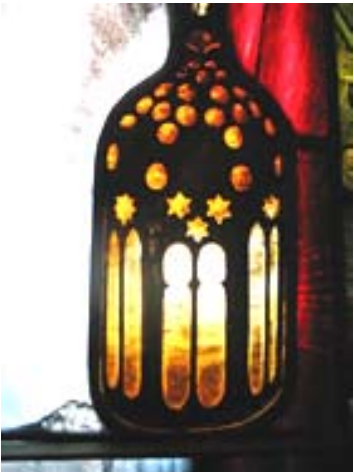
begins to sound, well, embarrassed. In his wonderful book *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, he manages just three glancing references to Easter or the Resurrection. This is as close as he comes to describing it: "After Easter, his followers experienced [Jesus] as a spiritual reality, no longer as a person of flesh and blood..." (p. 16) Prudent words, possibly wise, surely powerful to some readers – but you can't help noticing how they make a wide detour around the empty tomb.

"God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom," Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth, "and God's weakness is stronger than human strength." We like stories about wisdom and power, because we're human and we do. According to Jesus, though, God's favorite stories are about power that acts like yeast and like mustard-seeds, about the wisdom of becoming like a child and of answering violence with compassion. If Jesus is right, then the Resurrection – embarrassing as it is – is God's perfect power-and-wisdom story.

Can we live into that story, here in this world, and end up looking anything other than weak and foolish? Well ... think of the people who did and do live into it – from Jesus to Saint Francis to Nelson Mandela, not forgetting your amazing cousin Marilyn. Some of the names shine in human history; others shine just in the hearts of their family and friends. But dear Lord how bright they shine, even through the darkness of sin and death. Yes please, that's the kind of fool I want to be taken for. Life in the Resurrection? Sign me up.



“The light
shines in the
darkness,
and the
darkness
has not
overcome it.”



ALLELUIA

CALENDAR

April 1	6:30 p.m. Maundy Thursday Supper
April 2	12:00 noon and 7:00 p.m. Good Friday Liturgy
April 3	9:00 p.m. Easter Vigil at Grace Cathedral
April 4	<i>Easter Sunday!</i> Services at 8:00 and 10:00 a.m.
April 11	Pie Sunday (see p. 3)
April 13	Liturgy Committee Meeting
April 24	Rebuilding Together (see p. 3)
April 25	Welcome Ministry Meeting Vestry Meeting

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**We welcome your articles
on or before the 15th
of the month.**

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